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THE CAUSES OF CROMWELL'S WEST INDIAN EXPEDITION

SIR J. R. SEELEY, in his *Growth of British Policy*, regards the expedition against the West Indies as a mere incident unimportant in itself and in its relations and results. In his opinion Cromwell had no far-sighted plans in connection with the expedition, nor were economic considerations of more than mere secondary influence.¹ While the West Indian expedition at first glance seems of wholly minor significance, yet it is so vitally connected with the fundamental questions of Cromwell's government as to make it worth while to trace as far as possible the influences that prompted the attack on Spain, the origin of these influences, the extent of Cromwell's plans and whatever other considerations led to this expedition. In the first place, the affair was inseparably connected with his foreign policy. In the second place, it was inseparably connected with the religious movement on which Cromwell had ridden to power. In the third place, it had a vital connection with the most important economic questions of the Protectorate. Subsidiary to these were the questions: how to unite the Protestants of Europe and protect the Huguenots of France; how to prevent forever the return of the Stuarts to the English throne; and, still further in the background, how to recover England's ancient possessions in France.

At the very beginning of Cromwell's government the most important question in his foreign policy arose: Should he ally himself with France or with Spain? Cromwell never seriously intended making an alliance with Philip IV. unless driven to it as a last extremity. In spite of his turning now and then to Spain when unusually angered at France, his religious zeal and his economic hopes for England's greatness forced him back to the same point again—an attack on Spain. It is the dominant thought in his whole foreign policy.² He was bent on an accommodation with France, but he must first manœuvre Charles II. out of France, and establish his

¹ Vol. II., pp. 73-75.

² Although he did once offer to come to terms with Cardenas, the Spanish ambassador, it was in a moment of anger against France and was done in such a way as to make a consummation of the bargain extremely difficult. See Gardiner, *Commonwealth and Protectorate*, II. 446.

own position and power. He must also manœuvre France into giving a sufficient guarantee of the safety of the French Huguenots, whose welfare Cromwell had sincerely at heart. Spain was very useful in these diplomatic encounters.¹ Nor need the exorbitant and unwarrantable demands made on France cause us to think that Cromwell courted a rupture with Louis XIV. Cromwell desired an alliance with France, but Mazarin desired it more. While the negotiations were in progress Major Robert Sedgwick, under commission from Cromwell, made an unprovoked attack on Acadia and captured it. When Cromwell sent his expedition to the West Indies he instructed his commanders to capture French ships as well as Spanish. But neither of these acts produced a ripple on the stream of diplomacy.²

The problem of alliance, however, had no independent importance, for the solution of it depended entirely upon other influences than the mere wish to have England in the ordinary cordial relations with the rest of Europe. It was the religious and economic questions that were driving Cromwell on and that form the key to all that intricate maze which constitutes his foreign policy. With this key for a guide, and with the remembrance that the Protector hated Charles II. and all of the Stuart family and had to establish thoroughly his own power, his vacillation in his foreign policy becomes more apparent than real. The religious motives which influenced Cromwell to undertake this expedition—the desire for the union of the Protestant states of the world and for the establishment of Protestantism and religious freedom—are well understood. The problem of Cromwell's real character and motives is, of course, a most involved one, but it can safely be said that when his ambition did not absolutely conflict with his notions on religion, he was strongly influenced by his religious inclinations. Both now urged him against Spain. There was something of the spirit of the Crusades in Cromwell's attempt to overthrow the Spanish in the West Indies. It was to his mind a blow at Anti-Christ, an extension of the true kingdom of Christ in the world. In his judgment Protestantism was still in a critical condition, especially as Puritanism was on its decline, and needed a champion who could wield the sword if necessary.³ In addition, Cromwell's antagonism had, as was the

¹ See also Gardiner, II. 477-478.

² Thurloe, II. 583. John Leverett to Cromwell, September 5, 1654, tells of the capture of Acadia by Sedgwick in July of the same year. Mazarin was advised of it October 23, 1654, but must certainly have known it long before. However, there is no sign of protest on his part. See also Thurloe, II. 418, 419, 668.

³ Sir J. R. Seeley conjectures that the example of Gustavus Adolphus appealed strongly to Cromwell. It is questionable whether it was not rather that of Raleigh and the Elizabethans. See *Growth of British Policy*, II. 75.

case with many others, from the time of the anti-Spanish feeling during the reign of James, taken on a peculiar personal color, and this fact sharpened the edge of his desire to see Spain humbled.¹ The promptings, both early and late, which Cromwell had to the expedition, the whole general trend of English religious history from the time of Henry VII., the books that he must have read, the historical precedents which he would consider most sacred and binding, the precedents which he himself had established in the case of Ireland, his own deep religious life, all these influences directed him against Spain as the bulwark of the power of Rome.²

It is worth while noting that the religious ends for which the expedition was organized were fully impressed upon Cromwell's officers. After Sedgwick had been sent to Jamaica, one of the reasons he gave for not dispatching expeditions to harass the Spaniards was that the English did not have men enough to occupy the places captured "and so could not hope to effect our interests in the dispersing anything of the knowledge of the true God in Christ Jesus to the inhabitants."³ In his instructions to Daniel Gookin, who was sent to persuade New Englanders to emigrate to Jamaica, Cromwell said: "Our desire is that this place (Jamaica), if the Lord so please, be inhabited by people who know the Lord and walk in his fear, and by their light they may enlighten the parts about them (a chief end of our undertaking and design)."⁴ When Cromwell, angered at the refusal of the New England people to emigrate, vented his wrath on their agent, John Leverett, he said that in his mind one great reason why they ought to emigrate was that "that design hath its tendency to the overthrow of the man of sin."⁵

But the most powerful motives in bringing about the West Indian expedition were the economic. Cromwell's attitude toward economic questions is worthy of an examination which the limits of this article forbid. He certainly desired with his whole heart the unquestioned supremacy of England over the other nations of Europe. This he sought with unwavering persistency. England's position made it inevitable that her greatness should be commercial.

¹ The inconsistency between his frenzy against Spain and a leaning toward a Papist state like France troubled Cromwell's conscience. He referred to it in his fifth speech to Parliament and explained it lamely enough. Cromwell's *Letters and Speeches*, Carlyle, Chapman and Hall ed., 1893, Part IX., p. 164.

² Cromwell's mind had definitely centred on Spain as the moving power antagonistic to the Reformed religion and the English state. Even the Papists in England, Scotland and Ireland he considered "Spaniolised." See Fifth Speech, Carlyle.

³ Sedgwick to Thurloe, Thurloe, IV. 604.

⁴ Instructions to Gookin, in Granville Penn's *Life of Sir Wm. Penn*, II., App. H., 585-586.

⁵ Hutchinson, *Hist. Mass. Bay*, I. 190-192.

Her attitude toward the mercantile system, in relation to the great world-trade, was of vast importance. While no theorizer, Cromwell was immersed in the mercantile system of the time. The very fundamental idea of this system, begun by Richard II. and developed by Elizabeth, was that of national power. Therefore it appealed to Cromwell, who was erecting a great military state in England. The rise of nationalities and the discovery of America had hurried on the development of the mercantile system, and Cromwell came into power at its flood-tide. Since the discovery of America the world-commerce had enormously increased. The control of it brought with it national power, and all commerce and industry must be regulated with reference to England's position as compared with that of other nations. Under the mercantile system "treasure" was the best form of wealth, and the system consisted in (a) the accumulation of treasure, (b) the development of shipping and (c) the maintenance of an effective population.¹ In order to further these ends it was necessary to break through Spain's monopoly in the West Indies and gain control of Spanish America. The ablest economic writers of the time (one of whom,² at least, seems to have been in close relations with Cromwell), while they differed upon minor points agreed upon all the main points of the mercantile theory. Therefore, as far as Cromwell theorized at all, he drew his economic inspirations from undoubted believers in the full mercantile system. But Cromwell was a practical man, not a theorizer, and there is absolutely no sign that he could or would have worked out any original economic conceptions contrary to accepted doctrines. On the other hand, from the time when he was appointed a member of the Commission of Trade and Plantations in November 1643 until his attack on Spain, he manifested no deviation from the orthodox economic beliefs.

But although Cromwell had determined to satisfy his religious and economic desires by war if necessary, he made a first attempt to secure his wish by diplomatic action. He demanded of Spain two things. She must forego her monopoly in favor of England, give Englishmen freedom of trade in the West Indies and South America, and exempt English merchants and seamen from the operation of the Inquisition. But this in that day was like asking a nation to give up its independence. The whole life of Spain was bound up in her economic system and the absolute religious control exercised by the Inquisition. When these two demands were refused, the attack on Spain was assured.

¹ Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, I. 426.

² Sir Ralph Maddison.

There was no justification for a secret attack such as Cromwell made on the West Indies. Cromwell forced Spain to war by demanding what, according to the accepted theories of the time, he knew she could not grant. She had been far from committing such depredations on English commerce as France had committed. She had been the first to recognize the new Republic. She had been willing, even anxious, to ally herself with England either for active warfare against France, or without any stipulation as to France.¹ One cannot help feeling that Cromwell was guilty of a near approach to hypocrisy in his dealings with Spain about this expedition. His offers to Spain of an alliance had never been retracted nominally, although he had made such alliance impossible by his demands in regard to the Inquisition and freedom of trade in the West Indies. Cromwell was about to act unworthily of himself and in a manner very unlike his usual open way of doing things. Every one, except those immediately engaged, was ignorant of the purpose of his preparations. Everything was carried on in the dark, and various rumors misleading to Spain were set afloat. Without declaration of war or notice of any kind a fleet was fitted out, was sent out with the utmost secrecy as to its destination,² fell unawares upon the colonies of a friendly nation, and finally captured one of them before the defenceless people recovered from their surprise. Although Cromwell's conscience did not trouble him in the least about making the attack, after it was made he seemed anxious to clear his government from the charges of treachery and violation of international duties. This task was committed first to Milton, Cromwell's Latin Secretary, who partly repeats the allegations set out by Cromwell in his commission to Penn, Venables and others of August 18.³ But the outrages complained of had never before figured at all prominently, and evidently were made to do duty for the want of something better.⁴ Cromwell felt strongly, as time went on,

¹When Cromwell became Protector, Cardenas on the part of the King of Spain congratulated him and expressed the true friendship of Spain as matters stood. But if Cromwell would take the crown, Cardenas promised that the King of Spain would venture his crown to defend him. Cardenas afterward proposed a strict alliance which should specially secure Cromwell's government and provide against the claims and title of Charles II.

²Even Penn and Venables were ignorant of the final destination of the enterprise until they got to Barbadoes.

³*Manifesto of the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland, etc., put forth by the consent and advice of his Council, in which the Justice of the Cause of this Commonwealth against the Spaniards is demonstrated*, November, 1655. Masson, *Life of Milton*, V. 240-242; John Milton's *Prose Works*, Bohn; and Stowe MSS. fol. 83, cited in Gardiner, II. 475.

⁴Doubtless Cromwell and Milton, as well as the Presbyterians during the early part of the Protectorate, were disposed to assert that the death of Charles I. abrogated the treaty between Spain and England. See Cardenas to the King of Spain; Guizot, *Cromwell and the English Commonwealth*, App. 9, 404.

the ill repute that attached to this act of war. He therefore was impelled to make a personal defence of it in his speech before Parliament, September 17, 1656.¹ He virtually found nothing to add to what had been said in his commission and Milton's *Manifesto*. The fact is that Cromwell's party in England was a minority party. The political forces against him were powerful. A brilliant stroke that should at the same time set England at the head of the mercantile system and overthrow the Papal power in the West Indies would redound to his glory in England and overshadow in the public mind the illegality of his position.²

Whatever the reasons or justification, Cromwell determined to get hold of the West Indies, and the origin of the influences and the sources of information that impelled him to his attack on Spanish America are not far to seek. In the first place Cromwell was Elizabethan.³ He belongs with Raleigh, Gilbert and Hakluyt. The whole aspect of the West Indian expedition is Elizabethan; either Cromwell is a unique survival of the Elizabethan spirit or else he drew his inspiration direct from Hakluyt, Raleigh and Peckham. Their hopes for the expansion of the British Empire were his; their ideas as to how to accumulate treasure from America, extend English trade and relieve the overburdened population of England were his; their religious reasons for attacking Spain in America were his; their allegations of the weakness of Spain and the cruelty of Spaniards toward the Indians were his. Indeed it seems probable that Cromwell and his advisers had been diligent readers of Hakluyt, Raleigh's *Discovery of Guiana* and Peckham's *Discoveries of Sir Humphrey Gilbert*.⁴ Gage's and Modyford's memorials to Cromwell, portions of Milton's *Manifesto* of 1655, and Cromwell's Fifth Speech are in large part restatements of Hakluyt's *Discourse on Planting*, or of Raleigh or Peckham.

It is entirely possible that the connecting link between the Elizabethans and Cromwell was *The English-American, or A New Survey of the West Indies*, by Thomas Gage, published in 1648. Gage

¹ He says: "With this King and State (Spain) I say, you are at present in hostility. We put you into this hostility . . . For we are ready to excuse this and most of our actions, and to justify them too, as well as excuse them," etc.

² Seeley in his *British Policy* confirms this, II. 99.

³ This is true only in a general sense. He partook of the spirit of the Elizabethan age as shown by others than Elizabeth. For personally Elizabeth and Cromwell are opposites. The first represents England at rest; the second England in motion.

⁴ See especially Hakluyt's *Discourse on Western Planting*, *Maine Hist. Soc. Coll.*, 2nd Ser., Vol. II.; Raleigh's *Discovery of Guiana* in his *History of the World*, Vol. VI., edition of 1820, together with *Considerations on the Voyage to Guiana* in the same volume; and *A True Report of the late Discoveries*, etc., by Sir Humphrey Gilbert, by Sir Geo. Peckham, Hakluyt's *Voyages*, III. 308.

had an eventful history, and was no doubt the best-informed man in England on Spanish America.¹ His book created a sensation and was widely read.² The Dedicatory Epistle is addressed to Fairfax, whom he tries to spur on to undertake the conquest of America. Gage was undoubtedly familiar with most writers on the New World, although he says in his dedication that no one had written upon America for a hundred years. This statement proves Gage to be not over-scrupulous, for he mentions no authority, except Las Casas, to whom the hundred years would apply. He copied parts of his *English-American* word for word from Thomas Nicholas's *Conquest of the West Indies*, which was in turn, as he must have known, a translation of Gomara. Not only so, but it is altogether probable that he was acquainted with the accounts of Mexico and the West Indies published in Purchas.³ Parts of Gage's Dedicatory Epistle are very likely Hakluyt and Raleigh; and if he would take bodily from Nicholas's translation he would do the same by Raleigh and Hakluyt.

¹Gage came from Surrey, was educated as a Jesuit priest in Spain, but joined the order of St. Dominic. He was selected as a missionary to Spanish America and was smuggled into the colonies. He lived in Spanish America twelve years, mostly in Mexico and Central America. He returned to Spain, then to England, and renounced his religion about 1641. His work, *The English-American*, was the first adequate description of this whole vast and unknown region. Gage joined the side of Parliament and thus commended himself to Cromwell. See *Dict. of Nat. Biog.*

²Parts of the *English-American* were done into French and German, and later into Spanish.

³Southey in his edition of *Madoc* with notes, London, 1805, p. 468, refers to this, but describes Nicholas's *The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the West India*, etc., as translated from Bernal Diaz, instead of Gomara. Nicholas's translation was published in 1596. It was republished in Purchas, III., Book IV., chapter 9, ed. 1617. Gage copied his account of Cortez in many places word for word from Nicholas and not from Purchas. In his account of Mexico he may have followed Purchas's adaptation of Nicholas. He used the same ideas and often the same words and phrases, only changing the order of sentences and paragraphs. At any rate it is hardly conceivable that he should not have known of the account of Mexico in Purchas. If so he could not have failed to notice the account immediately preceding Nicholas's translation in Purchas, called *History of the Mexican Nation described in Pictures*, and the connection of Hakluyt, Raleigh and Spellman with it. Purchas was a writer well known in New England even, and these accounts of America are there commented on. See Rev. John Higginson to Rev. Thomas Thatcher, *Conn. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, III. 318. The fourth volume of Purchas contains among others a translation of Las Casas copied from the translation of 1583. See further *The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the West India, now called New Spaine*, etc., translated out of the Spanish tongue by T. N., 1578, London, 1596. The attention of the world seems to have been drawn about this time to Spanish America and Spain's treatment of the Indians. Las Casas had been translated into Dutch, Flemish, Latin, German and English (Winsor, II. 341). In 1655 was published *America; or an exact Description of the West Indies*, etc., by N. N., Gent., London; also a second edition of Gage's *English-American*. In 1656 appeared *The Tears of the Indians*, etc., by John Phillips (a nephew of Milton), a translation of Las Casas. The article on Phillips and his relations to Milton and Cromwell in the *Dict. of Nat. Biog.* is misleading. In 1699 Gage's book was translated into Spanish.

Thomas Challoner wrote the metrical dedication of Gage's book, which shows acquaintance with the writings of Purchas, Hakluyt, Ramusio and Raleigh.¹ It is very improbable that Gage, who was so much associated with Challoner, should not also have been acquainted with these authors as well as with Las Casas and Gomara.² The whole book is an attempt to arouse Englishmen against Spain and "Rome's Idolatry" and to show how valuable these provinces would be to England because of trade and of mines and bullion.

But Fairfax soon ceased to be the most pronounced leader of the revolution in England and Cromwell took his place. Gage then transferred his urgings to Cromwell, and six years later sent as a memorial to the Protector simply a résumé of his *English-American*.³ In it he skilfully brings forward what would most appeal to Cromwell through his economic and religious notions. He draws a tempting picture of the prospective trade of ginger, hides, sugar, wheat, wines, and bullion from the mines of Mexico and Peru. He is careful to mention the fact that "the power of Austria (Rome's chief strength and pillar) is in the American mines." He shows that the sparse population of this vast territory would make it an easy matter to expel the Spaniards; that the Indians could offer no opposition because not allowed to carry arms; that the interior towns also had no walls or guns. This memorial is put down in Thurloe's *State Papers* as belonging to December, 1654. But it bears internal evidence of having been written before December. There are indications that it was sent at Cromwell's request or at the request of some one for him.⁴ There seems to be no reasonable doubt that Gage had great influence in determining Cromwell's mind as to the expedition.⁵ If so, it is impossible that the memo-

¹ "Reader, behold presented to thine eye,
What us Columbus off'red long agoe,
Of this New-World a new discoverie,
Which here our author doth so clearly show;
That he the state which of these parts would know
Need not hereafter search the plenteous store
Of Hakluyt, Purchas and Ramusio," etc.

Again :

"Renowned Rawleigh,
And thereof writ both what he saw and knew."

² Gage was acquainted with the history of early discovery and speaks in his *Dedictory Epistle of Columbus at the Court of Henry VII.* In his memorial to Cromwell he likens himself to Columbus.

³ Thurloe, III. 59.

⁴ Gage had some communication with the government previous to the date of this memorial. On August 20, 1653, he sent a certificate in behalf of the widow of a pilot, one of his flock. Very likely he was asked to do so because of his standing with Cromwell. *State Papers Domestic*, 1653-4, p. 482.

⁵ Ludlow in his *Memoirs*, I. 417, says that Gage "was reported to have been a princi-

rial should have been sent as late as December, when all of Cromwell's plans were matured, and it certainly contemplates preparations to be made, not preparations already completed. There is no sign in it that Gage had been appointed chaplain to Venables or knew that he was to have a place in the expedition,¹ and Gage says, "Nothing can be acted upon the mainland until October."²

In this connection it is necessary to consider a like memorial by Thomas Modyford, governor of Barbadoes. He was consulted because of his experience in that part of the world and because he had performed valuable service for the Commonwealth party in the struggle between Ayscue and Lord Willoughby over Barbadoes.³ He advised the selection of Guiana, on the South American coast, and corroborated Gage in many particulars, especially as to the comparative ease with which Spanish America could be conquered. If any island was taken he advised Cuba.⁴ This document, too, is put down in Thurloe as belonging to December 1654. It certainly was written in answer to a request for Modyford's opinion and advice, which surely would not have been asked after all preparations were made.⁵ Both these memorials ought to be referred to the time before August 18th, when Cromwell issued his commission to Penn, Venables and others. They belong, with Cooper's letter to Thurloe, Mazarin's letter to Cromwell and the influence of John Cotton and Roger Williams in the matter, to the same general period previous to August 1654, and represent the season when

pal adviser of this undertaking." That this was true was the popular impression in Bishop Burnet's time. (See *Hist.*, I. 49.) He says in substance that while Cromwell was balancing in his mind this project, "Gage . . . came over from the West Indies" and influenced the Protector by his accounts of the wealth of the Spaniards and the feebleness of Spanish America. This illustrates Burnet's inaccuracy, for Gage returned to England seventeen years before Cromwell undertook this expedition. See also Long, *Hist. of Jamaica*, I. 221.

¹ On December 20 the Council registered an order for a ship to convey Gage to the fleet at Portsmouth. While the date is December 20, it is noted in the entry that he had already gone, and also that the warrant was issued on a previous order of the Protector. It is therefore altogether probable that he was appointed chaplain a considerable time before. Gage's words about himself as "one who waits for the conversion of the poor Indians," lead one to think that his motive in sending the memorial was that he might receive some such appointment.

² He also hopes that Cromwell's faith may *yet* be active abroad as well as at home, and that he may become the protector of the Indians as of England.

³ *Cavaliers and Roundheads, 1650-2*, by N. Darnell Davis, p. 209.

⁴ Long in his *History of Jamaica* accuses Modyford of advising Guiana instead of the islands for selfish reasons, on the ground that adding to the English sugar-producing islands would increase the supply and lower the profits. Modyford's reasons, however, given in his memorial, are perfectly sound and convincing.

⁵ It advises Cromwell to *land* in Barbadoes in November, if he can. Modyford would hardly have written such advice if there had been a possibility that it would not reach Cromwell until December.

Cromwell was balancing in his mind the question of an attack upon Spain.

The origin of the more theoretical economic influences ought not to be overlooked. Among the ablest economic writers of that age are Mun, Malynes and Maddison, all of whom lived in Cromwell's time and all of whom preached at bottom the same doctrines as to the mercantile system.¹ Sir Ralph Maddison seems to have been the economic authority of the Protector and his *Great Britain's Remembrancer*, based upon Malynes's *Lex Mercatoria*, was addressed or dedicated to Cromwell.²

Evidently Cromwell, before he had ratified the peace with the Dutch,³ but when he felt assured that the war was at an end, had been looking into the matter of the West Indies. He, or some one for him, applied to one William Cooper for suitable persons to act as guides in the waters adjoining Spanish America. He was anxious for information as to ports, and the latitude and longitude of islands in the Gulf of Mexico. Cooper in reply to the application furnished Thurloe a book in Dutch setting out the desired information, which was not to be had in English. In answer to Cromwell's request for information, he says: "How far this may contribute, I submit to you (Thurloe) and others." That the plans of Cromwell were somewhat mature and were known to Cooper appears from the fact that Cooper advises him, in the choice of captains and others, to be sure to choose as many as possible who have become accustomed to the heat of that climate. He even goes so far as to recommend two persons for responsible positions. Evidently he had talked with Thurloe or Cromwell before about this, or some other matter connected with it, for he mentions having given former notice about Powell, whom he now recommends. He also intimates that he will have further information.⁴

Cardinal Mazarin's powerful hand is also seen in this expedition. With that crafty insinuation which he knew how to use with deadly effect, we find him in nearly every letter through Bordeaux and De Baas holding up the bait of the West Indies before Cromwell. In a letter to his ministers, March 25, 1654, he made the first ad-

¹ Mun was an advocate of the mercantilist theory as to bullion, while Malynes was a bullionist. They both, however, had the same end in view. See Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry*, etc., and Palgrave, *Dict. of Polit. Econ.*; also Malynes's *Lex Mercatoria*.

² Edward Misselden ought also to be mentioned. He seems to have had no influence with Cromwell, having been a supporter of Laud and the King. Nevertheless, he afterward offered his services to Cromwell (December 1654), apparently without success. Thurloe, III. 13.

³ Ratified by Cromwell, April 19, 1654; proclaimed April 26th of same year.

⁴ Thurloe, II. 250, April 26, 1654.

vances in a roundabout reference to a foreign war.¹ Two days later he openly urged the Protector to a war in which he could not only get Dunkirk, but make as much progress as he wished in the Indies,² and on May 8th he added another inducement which weighed heavily with one committed to the mercantile system. He urged Cromwell, while he had a large fleet afloat,³ to employ it against the West Indies, which he said were in poor condition. He also furnished Cromwell with information, received from various sources in Spain, as to when the galleons would arrive at Cadiz, and urged their capture.⁴ Only twelve days later, in order to keep the Protector's mind occupied with the thought, he bade De Baas again approach Cromwell.⁵ Then he advanced a step further and offered to assist England in the capture of the two Indian fleets having on board six millions in gold. He would either join Cromwell in the business, or if the Protector wished to conceal his share in the matter, it could be done as he desired, and his share of the profits be faithfully guarded.⁶ Cromwell was perfectly willing to receive all of Mazarin's suggestions and valuable information, but he did not intend that France should have any claims upon the Indies, and all such offers were refused.

Mazarin's hint that England could have without molestation all of the Spanish Indies that she could conquer, was strengthened by Cromwell's knowledge of the weakness of the Spanish colonies. The mercantile and colonial systems which Spain considered her great prop were having a disastrous effect upon her colonies.⁷ While the laws enacted by the Council of India were in the main enlightened and remarkably careful of the rights and privileges of the natives, the actual government in Spanish America was exceedingly oppressive. Under the system of personal service, and the method of apportioning natives to compulsory labor, the population had rapidly declined and with it the strength of the colonies.⁸

It is interesting and important to notice the connection of New

¹ *Documents Inédits sur l'Histoire de France*, Mazarin, VI. 134. These letters constitute a strong proof that Cromwell early in 1654 had definite intentions against the West Indies. Mazarin with the subtle skill of which he was master had gained in some manner an inkling of the truth.

² *Id.*, p. 139.

³ Referring to the capture of French vessels by an English fleet off St. Malo.

⁴ *Documents Inédits*, etc., Mazarin, VI. 157.

⁵ *Id.*, VI. 163.

⁶ *Id.*, VI. 171.

⁷ See *Historia de la Economia Política en España*, por Don Manuel Colmeiro, II. Capitulo LXXVIII., Sistema Colonial.

⁸ See *Recopilacion de Leyes de las Indias*, edited by Boix, for Acts of Council of India, whose remedial legislation is the strongest possible proof of the extreme cruelty in the actual administration of affairs in Spanish America.

England with the West Indian expedition and the influence which New Englanders had in helping Cromwell to make up his mind in regard to it. Cromwell kept up some correspondence with William Hooke, then pastor in New Haven, Conn., who was a confidant of the Protector and related to him by marriage. A message to John Cotton through Hooke brought on a correspondence between Cotton and Cromwell. Cotton took occasion to urge the religious necessity of driving the Spaniards from America. As we shall see this seems to have, perhaps first, set the matter definitely before Cromwell's mind.¹ Cotton wrote to Cromwell July 28, 1651, and Cromwell answered about a month after the battle of Worcester.² It was some time during this correspondence and before the last of 1652 that Cotton urged Cromwell to "dry up Euphrates."³ So much of the correspondence as is extant would indicate that Cotton exercised some influence over Cromwell. Therefore, when the latter became Protector, the idea of his religious duty as to Spain was by no means new to him.

But there was a nearer American influence to Cromwell than John Cotton, far away in New England. Roger Williams went to England in November of 1651 and remained until 1654. Williams was strongly drawn towards Oliver, whom he called a second Cromwell raised up to champion religious liberty, and evidently the feeling was fully reciprocated.⁴ While in England he was in peculiarly close relationship with the Protector, and in his letter to the General Court of Massachusetts Bay, October 5, 1654, speaks of his many "private discourses" with "divers of the chief of our nation, and especially his Highness."⁵ To Williams, Cromwell disclosed his most secret religious thoughts and fears, which throw a strong light on what was driving him against Spain.⁶ So far did Williams's knowledge extend that he could say positively, "I know the Protector had strong

¹ See *Diary of Samuel Sewall, Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, 5th Ser., V. 436-437 and quotations made hereafter.

² October 2, 1651. See *Coll. of Original Papers of Mass. Bay Colony*, Hutchinson, p. 233, for Cotton's letter; and Cromwell's *Letters and Speeches*, Carlyle, Part VII., p. 308, for Cromwell's. Cromwell's letter is in the Lenox Library, New York City.

³ Cotton died December 23, 1652. There is nothing in Cotton's letter about this expedition nor in Cromwell's answer. The character of both letters would indicate that it was between the time of the battle of Worcester and December 1652, and while Roger Williams was in England, that Cotton urged upon Cromwell a blow at Spain. Williams and others refer to Cotton's part in the matter as too well known to require explanation.

⁴ *Narragansett Club Publications*, VI. 193.

⁵ *Id.*, p. 270.

⁶ "The late renowned Oliver confessed to me, in close discourse about the Protestants' affairs, etc., that he yet feared great persecutions to the Protestants from the Romanists, before the downfall of the Papacy." Roger Williams to John Winthrop, Jr., February 6, 1660, in *Narragansett Club Publications*, VI. 307.

thoughts of Hispaniola and Cuba."¹ His positive knowledge of Cromwell's intentions and finally of his plans was gained months before the commission of August 18th, and beyond any doubt was the result of discussion covering all the time since his arrival in England.²

John Winthrop, Jr., who had already heard something about the expedition,³ applied to Williams for information. Williams replied under date of December 15, 1654, in the letter in which he referred to the Protector's intentions as to Hispaniola and Cuba. He adds: "Mr. Cotton's interpreting of Euphrates to mean the West Indies,⁴ the supply of gold (to take of taxes) and the provision of a warmer Diverticulum and Receptaculum than New England is, will make a footing into those parts very precious."⁵

There is a very interesting letter by Rev. John Higginson, of Guilford, Conn., to Rev. Thomas Thacher of Weymouth, Mass., written October 25, 1654. He speaks of the destitution in New England and says that many were inclined to remove to Ireland, which Cromwell had tried before to colonize with New England people. He says further that Cromwell had signified his intention of doing what he could for the people of New England, whose condition he was sensible of; that if they would remove he might give them the opportunity where they should have towns, habitations and staple commodities. Higginson then conjectures the place to be Hispaniola or Mexico. He goes on: "A great fleet was prepared to be sent thitherward, and its thought that it was to drive out the Spaniard, which if it be effected there may be room enough for all New England people and many more, . . . Having constant intelligence from some nearly related to me, who are also nearly related to the Lord Protector,⁶ we of Guilford are as like to share in any privileges there as any other . . . Its thought by some that the design for the West Indies may be the means to dry up Euphrates, viz., the stream of supportments that makes glad the city of Rome, etc."⁷ The correspondence which Higginson refers to, in which

¹ *Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, 4th Ser., VI. 286, quoted hereafter.

² Williams wrote John Winthrop, Jr., July 12, 1654. It was his first letter after his return to America. If his passage took a month or six weeks his positive knowledge of Cromwell's intentions must have been gained at least before June 1, 1654. This letter to Winthrop contains nothing about the West Indian expedition, Williams evidently considering it a secret until the time set for its departure.

³ *Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, 3rd Ser., X. 1.

⁴ How did Williams know of Cotton's interpretation except through Cromwell?

⁵ *Id.*, 4th Ser., VI. 286.

⁶ Samuel Desbrow, brother of John Desbrow, brother-in-law of Cromwell; see Bernard C. Steiner's *History of Guilford and Madison, Conn.*, pp. 41, 65, 67.

⁷ *Conn. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, III. 318; *Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, 5th Ser., V. 437. See also Prince, *History of New England*; and Steiner's *History of Guilford*, p. 74.

Cromwell had signified his intention of doing what he could for the people of New England, went back to March 5, 1654, and earlier. The place of relief which Cromwell had so early in mind, Higginson (and probably Governor Leete of Guilford) understood, no doubt with the best of reason, to be Hispaniola or Mexico. For the Protector had notified New England people, undoubtedly through Samuel Desbrow in the correspondence about March 1654, that the project of their removal to Ireland was at an end.¹

There is a passage in the diary of Samuel Sewall, dated November 10, 1696, which supplies a curious confirmation of many facts as to this West Indian expedition, although written nearly forty years after Cromwell's death. It helps also to make plain the influence which New England men had in determining the Protector's mind to an attack on Spain. Sewall mentions a ride to Salem. He went to visit Governor Bradstreet, "who," he says, "confirms what had formerly (been) told me about Mr. Gage his being in the expedition against Hispaniola and dying in it."² November 11: "In the even visited Major Brown, there sung First part of 72 Ps. and last part of 24th. But first visited Mr. Higginson, though [he] had din'd with us. He tells me that the Protector, Oliver Cromwell, when Gen^l wrote to Mr. Hook of Newhaven, and therein sent commendations to Mr. Cotton; upon which Mr. Cotton was writt to by Mr. Hook and desir'd to write the Gen^l, which He did, and advis'd him that to take from the Spaniard in America would be to dry up Euphrates; which was one thing put Him upon this Expedition to Hispaniola, and Mr. Higginson³ and 3 more were to have gone to Hispaniola if the Place had been taken. O. Cromwell would have had Capt. Leverett to have gone thether Gov^r, told him was drying up Euphrates, and He intended not to desist till He came to the Gates of Rome. This Mr. Cooke said he had heard his father Leverett tell many a time. Gov^r Leverett said My Lord let us make an end of one voyage first and declin'd it; at which Oliver was blank."⁴

Williams, Cotton, Hooke and Higginson all had unusual opportunities of discussing with Cromwell such an undertaking, or else had unusual opportunities of knowing whether the idea had been fixed early in the Protector's mind. Thus before the seductive influences of Mazarin had turned Cromwell's eyes toward the West

¹ Steiner, *History of Guilford and Madison, Conn.*, p. 67; *Conn. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, III. 318. "Many have inclined to Ireland, but that is now at an end; the L. Prot. hath sent word that it is wholly disposed of."

² He died in Jamaica in 1656.

³ This is the same John Higginson as the writer of the previous letter.

⁴ *Diary of Samuel Sewall, Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, 5th Ser., V. 436-7.

Indies, John Cotton and Roger Williams, at least, had discussed with him this blow at the chief support of the Church of Rome.¹

It is important also to notice how far Cromwell's plans extended. He had no idea of the world-wide expansion of the British Empire in the modern sense, *i. e.*, of a union of colonies on an equal footing with the mother country. But, nevertheless, he did have a well-grounded idea, though somewhat undefined, of a widely extended British Empire, and his schemes of conquest were far-reaching. The events connected with this expedition when taken together bring out not only a policy, well considered and tenaciously held to, of setting England at the head of the navigation and mercantile system and at the head of all opposition to the Church of Rome, but also the profound calculation of Cromwell looking to the extension of the colonial system of England. St. Domingo was by no means the end of his designs. He saw in imagination England as the centre of a great naval empire. In this he anticipated the future and was the forerunner of modern English governmental policy. After St. Domingo was taken, according to Cromwell's profound scheme, England was gradually to absorb the rest of the Spanish possessions in America. This was the meaning of his talks with Roger Williams and Thomas Gage. This was in the direct line of the religious impulse that so strongly urged him against Spain. To this the economic influences that controlled Cromwell inevitably pointed. His designs took in the mainland of South America, and he already saw in imagination Guiana and the country between the Orinoco and Porto Bello in his possession. He had asked Cooper for information about all of the Gulf of Mexico from the Bahamas, and what course to steer from place to place, and Cooper recommended Captain Shelley because he knew most of the American coasts and had been south beyond the Rio de la Plata. He recommended Captain Powell because he had been in the Mexican Gulf "from top to bottom."²

A reference to the instructions given by Cromwell to the heads of the expedition discloses at once the very thorough manner in which the whole affair had been discussed and how fully developed were the plans. The commanders were directed first to gain an interest in that part of the West Indies which was in the possession of the Spaniard. Three methods of attack had been discussed by

¹ We are obliged to believe that Williams felt that there were good and sufficient grounds for an attack on Spain, and that considerations other than the religious warranted it, because of his strong stand against propagating the Gospel by the sword. See his letter to Endicott in which he says that no man can maintain his Christ by the sword and maintain a true Christ. *Narragansett Club Publications*, IV. 502.

² Thurloe, II. 250.

the Protector and were brought to the attention of Penn and Venables. The first was to land on some of the islands, particularly Hispaniola and St. John's Island, one or both.¹ Or, second, the expedition might make for the mainland anywhere between the Orinoco and Porto Bello, aiming principally at Carthagena.² Or, third, the two former methods could be combined so as to allow an attack on St. Domingo, or Porto Bello and afterward Carthagena.³ Modyford urged upon Cromwell the opportunities of taking Trinidad, and the country about the Orinoco, Venezuela and so on around to Carthagena. Gage discloses even more extensive plans of conquest and the influence of the plans of both Gage and Modyford is easily discernible in Cromwell's matured instructions. Gage brought before the Protector the picture of the conquest of Cuba, Honduras, Hispaniola, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Trinidad, Yucatan and, as a final step, Mexico and Peru. He expressed the hope of seeing him in full sway in Spanish America as he was in England. He clearly understood and described how weak Spain was. All Indians were, he said, deprived of arms, as were negroes and mulattoes, whether bond or free. In this he was correct.⁴ He was right, too, in saying that if the freedom of the slaves were proclaimed they could be depended upon to join the English.⁵ From the very beginning of the expedition General Penn had gone on the principle of extending British sovereignty over all possible portions of the Spanish domain. Almost the very day he captured Jamaica, in May 1655, he sent the *Martin* from Jamaica along the Spanish Main to Carthagena and the *Grantham* to Trinidad. Vice-Admiral Goodson, his successor, made attempts on Carthagena and Santiago de Cuba, was constantly on the lookout for further conquest and discussed the capture of Havana. Sedgwick, when virtually governor of Jamaica, also discussed with Cromwell the taking of Havana and Carthagena, and recommended getting the country

¹ This conformed to Gage's plan. It is to be noted that Mr. J. W. Fortescue in his article on this expedition printed in *Macmillan's Magazine*, LXIX. 184, says that Gage favored an attack on the mainland and Modyford on Cuba and Hispaniola. Gage is the one who very especially urged Hispaniola and Modyford the mainland about the Orinoco. See Thurloe, III. 59-63.

² This was in the main Modyford's plan.

³ Extract from instructions to Gen. Robert Venables, taken from Burchett, pp. 385-6. Cromwell says in these instructions that he communicates "what hath been under our consideration."

⁴ *Recopilacion de Leyes de las Indias*, II. 320, Ordinances XV., XVI., XVII., XVIII.

⁵ The ordinances in the *Recopilacion de Leyes de las Indias* in regard to mulattoes, negroes, etc., show that runaway slaves were numerous, that they were very ill-disposed toward the Spaniards and gave them much trouble. Modyford, also, advised arming the Indians about the Orinoco when they should be won over.

"down Ryo de Hatch and so to Santa Martha."¹ Among the Spanish prisoners brought by Penn's fleet to England was a native of the Canaries, with whom Cardenas, the Spanish ambassador, at once communicated. While a prisoner at Jamaica he had heard it said by English officers that among the plans they were to put into execution was the capture of St. Augustine, in Florida. Cardenas was sufficiently impressed with the correctness of the information to communicate it at once to his government.² In October 1655, Cromwell wrote to the following effect: "And it is much designed among us to strive with the Spaniard for the mastery of all those seas," etc.³ Nor should we lose sight of Sedgwick's capture of Acadia, although an attack on French territory, in the summer of 1654.

The advisers of Charles II. understood how far-reaching were Cromwell's plans in regard to conquest and colonization and perceived the real motives of his attack on the West Indies. "A.B." in writing to the King of Spain, January 1656, in behalf of Charles, lays great stress on the fact that Cromwell intended to colonize the West Indies and by his fleet cut off the Spanish trade.⁴ In fact on other grounds the entire expedition has no meaning. To suppose that after such enormous preparations and expense the Protector would be content with a few square miles of territory falls hardly short of absurd.

Notwithstanding the suggestions he received, this was in a peculiar sense Cromwell's own design. In originating and developing it he acted with practically unlimited authority. He took this momentous step alone. He had no parliamentary sanction for it, and many of the influential members of his Council were opposed to it. Nevertheless he persevered as a king might have done, for he was a king in fact. He ran counter to what, on the surface, seemed for England's advantage. He was opposed by the trading class, who looked only to the immediate effect on commerce of such a move. It meant a rupture with Spain, and great numbers of vessels and great quantities of English goods would be liable to seizure. It meant sudden ruin to merchants whose support of the government was necessary, and whose ships and goods would be confiscated.

¹ Sedgwick to Thurloe, January 24, 1655-6. Thurloe, IV. 454. This would include a considerable part of the western coast of South America.

² Cardenas to King of Spain, October 4, 1655. Guizot, *Cromwell and the English Commonwealth*, II., App., p. 447.

³ Cited from *The Expedition to the West Indies, 1655*, by J. W. Fortescue, *Macmillan's Magazine*, LXIX. 184, March, 1894. Note in this connection the diary of Samuel Sewall, in which Cromwell is said to have told Leverett that he did not intend to desist until he came to the gates of Rome.

⁴ British Historical Manuscripts Commission, Portland MSS., I. 679.

It meant perhaps a fatal reaction against the Protector himself. It was a critical point in Cromwell's career. The trade and manufacturing interests are powerful interests for any one to oppose. But like the great man he was, he was looking not at immediate risks alone, but at ultimate effects as well. Cromwell could not turn back; to give way and abandon his West Indian plan would have given such a shock to his reputation as to endanger his position. Through it all he kept a well-balanced judgment and a confident, resolute manner. He redoubled his efforts. He appealed to the political and religious prejudices of the people. He silenced if he did not convince the merchants and manufacturers, who are ever prone to favor those policies which will yield immediate rather than ultimate commercial advantages. Cromwell stood on the threshold of a new age. He belonged both to the past and to the future. He represents a curious blending of religious zeal and modern commercial spirit, eager, unrelenting, never-tiring. Religious interests as the basis of political action were passing away and in their place were coming the commercial interests of a new age. The bonds of religious unity were not the forces that in the new era could bind states together. The growth of national feeling, of independence and political unity, had forever supplanted them. Therefore any hope of uniting the Protestant states was futile. Nor could he hope to propagate Protestantism by the sword. The West Indian expedition was in some sense epochal. It opened a new era for England. It began the policy of the true expansion of the British Empire. It determined the economic policy, not only of the Protectorate, but of the Restoration. It determined England's relation to, and laid the foundation for her supremacy in, the mercantile and colonial system until the last years of the eighteenth century.

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